Review of: *Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character* By Robert Audi; Oxford University Press, 1997. xi + 304 pp.

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Article:

This excellent book consists of twelve chapters, divided into four parts: moral epistemology, ontology of ethics, moral psychology, and the foundations of ethics. Audi's overall goal is to bring to bear on moral philosophy insights from the fields of epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of action.

Part I, Chs. 13, defends an internalist epistemology and intuitionism. Internalism involves an appeal to some notion of introspective accessibility; its central idea is that what justifies a belief is internal to the agent in that the agent can become aware of it by introspection. Mill's utilitarianism is illustrative of externalism; Kant's theory, of internalism. Audi argues that internalism better accounts for how such factors as motives and ideals come into play in assessing agents and their conduct.

Audi begins Ch. 2 by noting an oddity: there is an almost unquestioned reliance on intuitions in assessing moral theories, yet most reject intuitionism with little more than a wave of the hand. Intuitionism as an overall moral theory holds that there is an irreducible plurality of basic principles, that each principle rests on a different ground, and that each is in some sense intuitively known. Siding with Ross, Audi does not posit a special intuitive faculty. Instead, he holds that moral truths are *mediately self-evident*, knowable (or at least justifiably believed) by adequately informed, suitably mature individuals who reflect on their content sufficiently. And like Ross, Audi is a fallibilist; people sometimes err.

Ch. 3 compares scepticism in the theoretical arena with that in the practical sphere: the former posits a gap between experience and truth; the latter, between experience and goodness. Audi rejects practical scepticism. He argues that we have adequate reasons for action.

Part II, Chs. 4–5, argues that there are moral truths, evidence for which is provided by certain natural properties. On the key issue of what relation holds between these moral truths and the natural properties that provide evidence for their presence, Audi discusses three views: reductive naturalism, eliminativism, and the supervenience view. He argues against the first two positions, and defends the third. He positively charactises supervenience as a kind of relation between moral and natural properties that is non-reductive, epistemologially a priori, conceptually constitutive, and the ground of know-ledge of general moral truths. Later Audi shows that the supervenience of moral on natural properties reflects an *ontological dependence*: even if moral properties are not themselves natural, their possession presupposes that of certain natural properties as their basis. We can naturalise moral explanations without naturalising moral properties. One of many of Audi's examples is that it is a conceptual truth that governmental injustice depends on and is constituted by such things as seizure of land and police brutality. On the account developed, then, moral judgments are ontologically objective, naturalistically anchored, epistemologically objective, and general moral knowledge is grounded a priori.

Part III, Chs. 6–8, treats topics in moral psychology. The principal focus of Ch. 6 is self-deception. Audi develops an account of self-deception, provides examples, and shows its connection with rationalisation. Self-deception and rationalisation are shown to be manifestations of our rational makeup even though they are typically defects in it. This provides a framework for developing a broader picture of rational action. The nature and scope of responsibility, especially responsibility for character, is the topic of Ch. 7. Normative responsibility is a kind of eligibility for normative assessment. People are not responsible for that over which they have no control. Going one step further, we might endorse the *traceability thesis*: all moral responsibility ultimately rests on responsibility for basic acts. The control one has over one's character traits is based on control over one's actions which in turn affects one's acquisition or retention of these traits. But then we can ask whether control over actions depends on control over wants and beliefs from which actions emanate. Audi argues that we can have the requisite control over actions even if we do not have control over the underlying wants and beliefs. For one thing, it is not even desirable that we control all of our beliefs; if our beliefs about the world are accurate, they are dictated by things external to us. For another, beliefs and desires are not experienced by people as alien forces. People have the reflective capacity to single out particular beliefs and desires for scrutiny and potential elimination, which gives them important powers In this context, it is natural to wonder whether *motivational internalism* - the view that the belief that one ought to A implies motivation to A - must be true if people are responsible. After all, how can a person's reason control conduct unless it has motivating power? Audi's answer is that responsibility does not imply motivational internalism. Even if a practical judgement that one ought to do A does not imply motivation, there is no reason to think that its cognitive status will interfere with or block such motivation. "Responsibility requires that one *can* do the crucial thing ... ; it does not require that one must do it, or must be motivated to" (p. 165).

Distinguishing between acting in accord with virtue (say, doing a just deed) and acting from virtue (say, doing just deeds the way that just people do), in Ch. 8 Audi develops a detailed account of acting from virtue (especially pp. 180–182). Audi also distinguishes between acting from a virtue directly and doing so indirectly: the former is aiming at the target of the virtue under the relevant aretaic concept; the latter, under some appropriate description framed in terms of base properties of action on which the value supervenes. This allows for a broad conception of acting from virtue, captured in what Audi calls the *moral motivation thesis*: given a suitable immediate motive connected in the right way with the moral field of the virtue, the action can be performed from virtue even if the action's ultimate motivation is not (directly) moral. There can also be *degrees* to which one may act from virtue, depending on the extent to which non-virtuous motives contribute to the action. What role virtue plays in determining right action is debatable; but in the theory of moral worth virtue is central.

Part IV deals with practical reason and the foundations of ethics. Ch. 9 develops an account of autonomy. Autonomy is best understood in terms of self-government, and not only manifests itself in the control of actions, but also attitudes, emotions, and traits of character. Autonomy is not the same as freedom, for a person in prison is unfree but can be substantially autonomous. Various things can undermine autonomy, including compulsion, dissociation, and weakness of will. Autonomy involves not merely control, but *principled* control. Autonomous agents must be capable of a sense of living up to, or failing to live up to, a principle, standard, or ideal. According to the *instrumental* conception of autonomy, the job of reason is to serve desire. Desire gives the ends and reason instructs how best to achieve those ends. By contrast, *objectivism* holds that it is rational both to believe that some things are intrinsically good and to want them for their own sake. On this view, things of intrinsic value and moral truths can be discovered by reason and agents can govern their behaviour accordingly; reason is not desire's servant. Audi concludes this chapter arguing against the instrumentalist account.

The concern of Ch. 10 is the relationship between the intellect and the will, between reason and morality. The crucial question here is whether in *holding* a moral judgement one must *have motivation* to act accordingly. *Motivational internalism* is the view that motivation *is* internal to moral judgements. If one denies motivational internalism, one need not deny that moral judgements provide reasons for action; for *normative reasons* are reasons for action even if they do not necesssarily motivate. Audi's overall purpose here is to show that even if

motivational internalism is mistaken, there are strong connections between holding a moral judgement and having reasons for action.

Ch. 11 argues for the possibility of knowledge (or at least justified belief) about value, and argues that if there is anything of intrinsic value there are objective reasons for action. Audi introduces "value-as-instantiation", the view that the primary bearers of intrinsic value are instances, conceived as concrete realisations of certain kinds of states of affairs, and couples this with "experientalism", the view that only states of experience can have intrinsic value. Audi rejects hedonism and is sympathetic to the view that there are a plurality of intrinsic goods. He then argues (p. 262) that intrinsic value provides reasons for action and a basis for constructing an account of right. This is another illustration of Audi's "moderate intuitionism", "the view that both the intrinsic value of certain kinds of experiences and the truth of certain moral principles is non-inferentially knowable" (p. 265).

Finally, Ch. 12 extends the case for moderate intuitionism only with a Kantian twist. A theory is *normatively complete* provided that it accounts for everything that people morally ought to do and ought not to do. A theory has *first-order* completeness provided that it accounts for every instance in which we have a prima facie duty and why; it possesses *second-order* completeness provided that it accounts for the finality of any duty that prevails in a conflict of duties. In deciding the relative stringency of two conflicting duties, Audi believes that a Kantian test can be usefully employed, thereby achieving second-order completeness for Rossian intuitionism (pp. 280-285).

I have here been able only to describe briefly some of the main conclusions of Audi's book. I have not had the space to explain the arguments, of which there are many, and all of great depth. This book succeeds in making moderate intuitionism a highly plausible theory; it succeeds too in bringing to bear on that theory resources from epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of action, thereby painting a fairly complete picture of a moral theory.